

Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board Meetings
Minutes
October 15, 2008

Members: Alan Bowser, Darian Unger, Marilyn Seitz, Lucinda Lessley, Mark Woodard, Megan Moriarty, Kathy Stevens, Mitch Warren, Victor Weissberg, and Debbie Spielberg

Members Absent Tiffany Graham-Golden, Cassandra Ford, Fran Rothstein, Phil Olivetti, Mary Pat Spon, Deborah Linn and Evan Glass

Call to Order and Introduction:

Darian Unger, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. members and attendees introduced themselves.

Approval of Minutes: The Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board approved the September 8, 2008 minutes.

Community Comments

Bob Colvin distributed the East Silver Spring Citizens Association, Inc. Newsletter and reported that the citizens group was cleaning up trash and cutting invasive plants on Piney Branch Road and Dale Drive but there was a wash-out that took out some of the trees and created an environmental issue. Parks Department have come back and planted a lot of trees and our group is planning to go back and continue to clean up.

Chair Report

Darian Unger reported that:

- County Council approved the zoning changes to allow the Fillmore to go through and we communicated this through County Council and voiced our support for the Fillmore although we had concerns about the transparency of the process.
- He will continue to meet with Councilmember's on behalf of the Board so when Silver Spring issues arise they are aware of where the community stands. The Silver Spring Library project issue was coming- up and I met with Councilmember's Trachtenberg and Leventhal. I will continue to meet with Councilmember's and welcome Board members to attend these meetings.
- There was an Outreach Committee meeting earlier this evening. The Transportation and Pedestrian Safety Committee will continue to join the other two committees for awhile and depending on the Fenton Village Forum in the next couple of days we might push for a Purple Line Forum as well.
- My opposition to the ambulance fee is well known and documented therefore I am going to step back during the ambulance fee discussion and Kathy Stevens will lead the discussion.

Director Report

Gary Stith reported that:

- October 15 – 7:00 p.m., Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board and CED Committee, Community Forum: Next Steps for Silver Spring Fenton Village, Nora School, 955 Sligo Avenue
- October 16 – 7:00 p.m., Informational Community Meeting Pedestrian Safety on Piney Branch Road, Long Branch Community Center, 8700 Piney Branch Road.
- October 18 – 10:00 a.m., Fenton Village Walking Tour – Starting at the Silver Spring Regional Center, 8435 Georgia Avenue
- October 18 – 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., Fall Festival in Downtown Silver Spring
- October 20 – 7 p.m. Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board, Neighborhoods Committee, Silver Spring Regional Center, 8435 Georgia Avenue
- October 21 – 6:30 p.m. Third Design Charrette for Silver Spring Library Site Project, Long Branch Community Center, 8700 Piney Branch Road. We've had two good meetings about the library site planning process. RTKL has presented five options and has come up with a sixth option based on comments from the last meeting. The library posted information about these meeting on their website at <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/libtmpl.asp?url=/content/libraries/buildings/ssproject.asp>
- Nov 5 – 7:00 p.m., Silver Spring/Long Branch Community-Based Collaborative to discuss strides made in the County Executive's Positive Youth Development Initiative, Long Branch Community Center, located at 8700 Piney Branch Road
- Nov 22 – 9:30 11th Annual Montgomery County Thanksgiving Parade
- Nov 22 - 1:00 p.m., Open House and Public Hearing on the Purple Line AA/DEIS, Montgomery College Takoma Park/Silver Spring Campus Falcon Hall, 7600 Takoma Avenue, Takoma Park. I would like to suggest inviting Mike Madden/MTA to the November 10th meeting to give an update on the Purple Line.
- The Interim Operating Site – The County moved all the buses off the transit center site. They are operating on Wayne Avenue, Dixon and Bonifant and the taxi stand moved over to Ramsey. This seems to be working very well even though it is not as convenient for people because they have to walk from the Metro up to where the buses are. A brochure was design in both English and Spanish, signs are posted all over the site, and information is on the County website. We received the new VanGo palm card and on the back is the new route. We have expanded the route and it goes out East West Highway to 16th Street, up 16th Street to Spring Street, down Second Avenue and this area was not served before. The route is longer and in order to keep head ways for buses at a good level we added a third bus and they operate from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday. This information will be distributed and is available at the Regional Center, TRiPs Store, and Urban District Kiosk.

Discussion

Darian Unger commented that the Board has been pushing for extended hours for the VanGo and it's great we have a third bus but where did the money come from?

Gary Stith responded the funding for the Interim Operating Site budget comes out of the Capital Project Budget for the Transit Center and the funding for the additional bus came out of that as well. The third bus is not funded forever but for the period of construction. Once the transit

center is completed the VanGo should be modified because it will go into the Transit Center. Whether we modify the other parts of the route I don't know. The transit center should be completed in approximately two years or a little longer.

Debbie Spielberg asked if they are tracking of ridership?

Gary Stith responded that they have tracked ridership in the past and anticipates they will continue.

Marilyn Seitz asked about the timeframe of the Civic Building and Veterans Plaza

Gary Stith responded the Civic Building is under construction and schedule for completion late 2009. We would really like to dedicate Veterans Plaza on Veterans Day, November 11, 2009.

Update on EMST Fee Legislation

Kathy Stevens introduced Chief Scott Graham and explained that the Board voted against the ambulance fees and communicated that sentiment to the County Executive and County Council.

Assistant Chief Graham, Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service reported that:

- Chief Thomas W. Carr, Jr., will retire from Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service and has been named Fire Chief, City of Charleston (SC) Department. The County Executive named Chief Richard Bowers, Acting Fire Chief effective November 1, 2008.
- The County Executive proposal went across with the FY10 budget proposal and we have taken input from those who oppose the fee and from different members of the industry. Emergency Medical Service Transport (EMST) Fees will not be charged to a single resident of Montgomery County. The EMST fees account for about 16% of the funding of emergency medical services across the country. Insurance Companies bill into their rates provision for emergency medical treatment.
- The Fire and Rescue Service in Montgomery County is growing and we are running about 120,000 incidents per year, emergency medical incidents run about 70,000 per year and of that approximately 50,000 result in a transport to a medical facility. We will break ground on October 23 in Takoma Park on a facility that is in the neighborhood of \$10 million dollars as a state of the art facility that will be part of the cityscape and community.
- Chief Carr presented the Apparatus Management Plan to the County Executive and brought all the fire apparatus to the Public Service Training Academy, had a Maryland State DOT Inspector on hand and the majority of the apparatus had various mechanical problems. The Apparatus Management Plan lead to a \$32 million dollar appropriation from the County Executive and County Council to purchase 37 new fire engines, 9 new aerial trucks which Silver Spring purchased one off the same contract and approximately 20 new emergency service units.
- The transport fee would raise at least \$14 million a year, fund and enhance the County's fire and emergency medical services in the face of the increasing resource demands and

revenue constraints. The fee will be billed directly to Montgomery County resident's health insurance companies and uninsured County residents will be exempt from fees. The bill goes to the insurance company and we accept in full what the insurance company pays and we are allowed through the Health and Human Services Office of the Inspector General. This system is running around the entire National Capital Region and our bill is probably more generous than others in the region.

- The net proceeds of the EMS transport fee will be devoted to maintaining the current level of Emergency Medical Services and enhancing those services with new fire apparatus, additional staffing, new stations in the growing upcounty area, and incentives for volunteer opportunities.
- The transport fee would offer us the ability to keep the world-class Emergency Medical Services that we currently have and the opportunity to enhance those services, despite significant fiscal constraints.
- Montgomery County will have an agreement with area hospitals to provide and share demographic information, name, address, date of birth and insurance information with patients who are transported. A third party billing company will be contracted by the County to collect fees from the insurance companies, including Medicare. Any costs associated with collecting the EMS fees will be greatly offset by the new revenue.
- The quality of service for patients will continue to be of the highest priority for Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Services
- We have addressed citizens concerns about them not calling 911 for fear of receiving a bill and the concern over insurance rates going up, the insurance rates are gauged on the region in which you live. We can not find a single jurisdiction in the Country that has experienced a drop in 911 calls attributable to EMST Fees. Montgomery County is the only jurisdiction within the National Capital region with the exception of Loudon County that is not billing insurance companies for EMST fees.
- We talked with representatives from Blue Cross and Blue Shield, United Health Care Associations and the reality is health care rates are going up every year and the percentage of EMST cost to the insurance company is less than a percentage of 1%.
- We have met three times with County Council Public Safety Committee and have a meeting with them on October 23 and hopefully move this out from Committee to full Council. We worked with all the Councilmember's to answer all the questions they have received from their constituents and I think we have done a good job.
- Some of the groups that have endorsed this proposal are the Washington Post, Gazette Newspaper, CASA of Maryland and the East County Regional Service. I invite any questions from this Board.

Discussion

Lucinda Lessley asked do insurance company shift these cost onto their insured.

Assistant Chief Graham responded if the service is not covered you do not receive a bill we accept the extent of insurability's. If the insurance company calls and refuses to pay the EMST bill than that's it and we are done.

Debbie Spielberg asked how senior citizens were currently handled in Montgomery County.

Assistant Chief Graham responded currently there is no fee for senior citizens. Medicare accepts EMST as part of their fee process and of the \$350.00 basic life support they allow \$267.00. Those with Part A, Part B supplemental insurances Medicare will automatically assign that to the Part A, Part B providers and that is recuperated by the Fire Department for our needs. Medicare and Medicaid patient only see an explanation of benefits. We have \$200,000 dollars for a public education campaign and the Senior Citizens Fire Station Task Force has endorsed this to help educate minorities, senior communities, we will reach those at risk communities, and the undocumented community. This will be a full media blast.

Library Update

Darian Unger commented that five meetings with the community have been held to set the POR and we finished two out of three Design Charrette meetings regarding the library spacing. Rita Gale from Montgomery County Public Libraries presented the results of the Program of Requirements, (POR) to the community. The community had numerous questions and basically the long standing question is the POR based on old data from ten years ago and stated that things have changed. The Library Department held these POR meetings to hear what the community had to say conducting three general meeting and two for teenagers and reported on the results. Questions from the community was that the POR had not been expanded enough and one of the missing pieces was the demographic data and the relative size of the proposed Silver Spring Library relative to what it was a month ago before these POR meetings, relative to the current library which is very small and relative to all the other libraries in the County. I asked for a comparison to basically see books per-capita, number of meetings rooms per population and they are still working on this.

Parker Hamilton, Director, Montgomery County Public Libraries reported that:

- There were a list of things the community felt were missing and we looked at it and there are about seven that the Library Department staff agreed with the community on and they are:
 - Media Room
 - Number of tutoring rooms and we do need more so we need to go back and get it cost out and the space added.
 - Meeting space and chairs an adult area and the community is right so we are going to take a look at that.
 - Size of children and what we added is not enough so we need to look at that space and that it is appropriate for the community. All the information of meetings is located on the library website at <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/libtml.asp?url=/content/libraries/buildings/ssproject.asp>.
- The architect is spacing those other items and we hope to have this information by Wednesday or Thursday of this week. Once we have the information we will put it in the draft POR and we will share it with the community probably by posting it on the website, go to the Friends of the Library before we take it to the County Executive. Community input is still being heard.

Discussion

Alan Bowser stated that he attended several of the meetings and one issue that continues to come up is the size of space and this is going to be a very unique multi-use building with, housing and

retail. The presentation given by Rita Gale, the square footage is now 52,000 and you have mentioned 3 new additional usages will this be on top of the new 52,000 square feet. The members of the community active in these discussions have a good point when they look at libraries in urban areas, other parts of the County and Virginia and it seems the libraries are more spacious and generous with square footage given the number of people who live in the service area. Gary Stith made a point that the Long Branch Library is not too far away but it is beside the point because we have an active community which is downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods and I don't think many from here go over there. Appropriate space and spaciousness is really important to me and some of my neighbors. There was an idea for a green roof or an outside deck where people could go. Is that back in the plan?

Parker Hamilton responded yes it is still in the plan. The Library Department prides ourselves on listening to the community this is your library and the most important building on the site. A Child Specialist will meet with us all day tomorrow regarding the early literacy room and discuss with us the best practices and new trends when looking at children services and the reason why we are going to expand the children room. The new Silver Spring Library will be the first urban library within Montgomery County. Important to me as we go forward is that we get the building right. You need to have the hours right when the new library opens but in my opinion the library needs to be opened every Sunday year round and stay open until at least 10:00 p.m. every night and this is critical. I've looked at the demographics and if you look by policy, area it states 80,000 if you look by planning area it states 60,000 it does not matter you need to have the hours to give people options on when to come.

Debbie Spielberg asked do the hours need to be taken into consideration now and how does it fit in with everything else.

Parker Hamilton responded that it is in the Operating Budget and you need to keep an eye on it. Rockville Library is not opened the appropriate hours and does not have the staffing it needs and I want to ensure when the new Silver Spring Library opens we don't have what we have Rockville.

Darian Unger stated that I met with Councilmember's George Leventhal and Duchy Trachtenberg of the HHS committee that oversees the library and basically stated that the Library Department is listening, but left to be determined was are they hearing it and responsive to the community. At the last meeting there was dissatisfaction and that is why I was hoping to look at some per-capita. This is not a very big library and less space per-capita than other libraries in the County and is evidently a community concern. Did the Library Department listen yes, people wanted more books the size of the collection increased by 40% and all these things are expanding by over 10% but somehow the size of the library increased only 7% despite demographic concerns. Rita Gale solicited input at the meeting very well but all demographic discussion was shifted to the side and we have not as yet had a meeting to talk about demographics. The community concerns are there and if all these things like the reading area or collection room is increasing by 10% and the overall size of the library is increasing by 7% are we going to end up with a small library.

Parker Hamilton stated the 7% is from the old POR. We have gone from 38,000 square feet to 53,000 square feet and looking at additional space based on the new feedback.

Debbie Spielberg commented that Parker Hamilton raised the issue of staffing and hours and something for the Board to take into consideration. There is somewhat of a tension given the nature of how the library is going to be designed it will be on more than one floor and the staff needs are going to be increased how can one reconcile the two. Is there a way to think about this in the designs about collections or how part of the services get placed so you can maximize the hours opened even when the library is not fully staffed.

Parker Hamilton responded that when the library is opened people should be able to use all the programs and services available. We have in there that at all times we have two people on all floors.

Alan Bowser asked if the recommendation to be open from 10:00 to 10 p.m. at least as a minimum.

Parker Hamilton stated that before they make a final recommendation she would discuss this with Gary Stith regarding the traffic patterns and it may be it could be opened earlier than 10:00 a.m.

Darian Unger stated after looking at the data the net was 27,000 and changed to 31,000 which is a relatively small increase in the size of the library versus everything going into the library including books and people. He realized the data was incomplete but on the relative side I think will be a concern.

Parker Hamilton responded the number in the PDF is 43,000 and it went down. The only thing I can say is that we will not build a library that is going to be too small. We have a meeting with the County Executive on November 12 and with the Health and Human Services Committee on November 20th.

Neighborhoods and Transportation Pedestrian Safety Committee

Megan Moriarty reported that:

- Joint meeting was held with Neighborhoods Committee and Transportation & Pedestrian Safety Committee on September 15. We have Darian Unger as the Chair for Transportation & Pedestrian Safety Committee and we are looking for a new Chair so in the meantime we will combine both committees.
- We had the Public Safety update, Weed and Seed update, Traffic Police attend and we had a briefing by Tom Street taking about the Code Enforcement Task Force and they have finalized their recommendation and the draft report is in the packet. We heard from Jeff Dunckel with Montgomery County Pedestrian Safety Initiative and there were numerous questions about the upcoming audit for Piney Branch and things that have been pushed back due to funding issues and all details are in the minutes.

The next joint meeting of the Neighborhoods Committee and Transportation and Pedestrian Safety Committee is on October 20 and we will discuss a number of different issues. I

wanted to highlight a new program the Silver Spring/Takoma Park Community Indicators project. These are a group of community members that will work on community based research and be at the next meeting sharing how far they have gotten, the housing indicators they have chosen and looking for community input.

CED Committee

Marilyn Seitz reported that:

Our last meeting was discussing preparations for the Public Forum on Fenton Village, October 15 at the Nora School, 955 Sligo Avenue, doors open at 6:30 p.m. and meeting starts at 7:00 p.m. We did a survey a couple of months ago and I was surprised that no one knew where Fenton Village was. Flyers have been distributed by the Urban District staff to all the businesses in Fenton Village. We are having representatives from the Historical Society, Planning Board and discuss what is going to happen and what people vision, what do people want in an urban village. We are conducting a walk around on October 18, 10:00 a.m., of Fenton Village starting at the Silver Spring Regional Center.

Megan Moriarty suggested that they reach out to the rental community and hopefully get residents from Silver Spring Towers to attend. There are a couple of people from my network that I can invite that live in Fenton Village. I think it is important to make calls and talk with people putting out a flyer is one thing but people are not aware of what an urban village is.

Kathy Stevens stated she would advertise with her civic association and perhaps we can emphasize that this is the kick-off to other meetings.

Darian Unger stated he was working on an overview for people to take that explains what an urban village is, what Fenton Village is, the future of Fenton Village – and what do we want to see, how to stay involved in the process and what's next in Silver Spring. If this forum works we may try others forums if we find it a useful way of getting community input and information out. The Fenton Village Forum is taken the place of the October CED Committee meeting and the Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board is hosting it.

Gary Stith thanked Jennifer Nettles for doing the flyer, providing snacks for the forum and hot beverages on the Walking Tour. We will provide drawings at the forum on some of the projects and the largest project will be the Hillerson project between Thayer, Silver Spring Avenue, Georgia and Fenton. The County has been working with Mr. Hillerson on an agreement for joint development using the surface parking lot and my understanding is the agreement has been signed or will be signed shortly. Mr. Hillerson is out of town but agreed to come to the November CED Committee meeting to present his project. This will be the largest new commercial project in Fenton Village and Mr. Hillerson is looking for community feedback and has not submitted to Park and Planning for their review and approval.

New Business

Alan Bowser announced the following:

Silver Spring Town Center, Inc., which is a non-profit the community developed to provide programming for the new Veterans Plaza and Civic Building is presenting a concert on Sunday November 9, 7:30 p.m., at the Round House Theatre in Silver Spring, ticket are \$20.00 dollars. Jazz keyboardist Marcus Johnson and the Marcus Johnson Project will perform, along with acoustic blues guitar master, Michel Baytop, at the "Tribute to America's Veterans" concert sponsored by the Silver Spring Town Center, Inc., The County Executive and 20 to 30 recovering Soldier's from Walter Reed Medical Center and the concert will be a benefit for a Montgomery County non-profit called Operation Second Chance, based in Clarksburg and run by Cindy McGrew Founder & President works with Walter Reed Medical Center to help people transition back to life after Iraq and their service.

Kathy Stevens reported that:

The Outreach Committee met for a revised first time this evening. There had been a group last fall working on Board outreach, the Strategic Planning Group got together and was going in a strong direction and we put our work on the table. We have now come back together Lucinda, Megan, myself, Vic and we are working with Dwayne at Silver Spring Regional Center on outreach issues we will meet again next month and are seeking some input for website re-do's, renovations and changes that Regional Center will be working on. Lucinda is going to draft a sample e-mail asking what the community needs from the website. We will be working on pulling text and information for the website and some sort of printed piece. Thinking about how to work on increased involvement from all the diverse corners of our community in the Board, Committee meeting and attending things like the upcoming forum. The Annual Report is late and before I do it we would like feedback from this group on what our goals are from now until the end of July.

Lucinda stated that we do have a strategic plan out there and it is to set annual goals which shift from the basis of the annual report. We want to strengthen our advocacy efforts and we used notes from the retreat.

Darian Unger asked the Board if there was any thought's about the library or ambulance fees should we be changing our course of action.

Kathy Stevens responded on the library we have more information to get before she would make a decision and we need to be aware of timelines because they are meeting with County Executive November 12.

Darian Unger stated perhaps we will be delighted with the recommendations for the library and in that case no action will be necessary. If we think we are not then we need to propose a letter and do it quickly.

Kathy Stevens stated that this initiative does not fit into a letter because we have done a lot process wise from POR meetings, Design Charrette that has created community input and community input will speak for itself to a certain extent but it may take someone on the Board to sum up those issues and supply them to us so we can all e-mail our individual Councilmember's.

Gary Stith stated ultimately the final decision is when the Council sets the construction budget in the Capital Budget and this won't happen until next year.

Darian Unger stated that there are all these other ways. I will probably meet with George Leventhal, head of the committee that oversees this and talk about what happen today including the general feel. My personal impression is that the community still feels the library is going to be very small. On the ambulance fees my opposition is well known and Alan Bowser seems to support the ambulance fee.

Alan Bowser stated that he did not think the Board needed to do anything else. The Board has taken a position in opposition and I don't know if the County Executive really wants this Board to take another vote and if they did it would be overwhelmingly opposed to ambulance fees and would not move it forward by having another vote or another letter.

Debbie Spielberg commented the County is between a rock and a hard place. Most of us think ambulance fees are potentially a problem but the County has very little sources of revenue and they are shrinking. They can not do a gas tax and income tax is limited. I don't feel like the fees were ever represented as just for Fire and Rescue and understood it as a way to raise revenue.

Darian Unger stated the actual fire tax currently covers more than the actual Fire Department expenses for an entire year and this is a way to raise revenue for other things. My reading is that we are not about to change our opinion on this issue although some individual positions may have changed over time.

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

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